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Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

Cory Everett-Lozano, [303-894-2913](tel:303-894-2913) w, cory.everett@state.co.us
Eric Brown, [303-547-5308](tel:303-547-5308) c, eric.brown@state.co.us

Gov. Hickenlooper names new Commissioner of Insurance

DENVER — Monday, July 22, 2013 — Gov. John Hickenlooper announced today the appointment of Marguerite Salazar as the state's new Commissioner of Insurance. She will begin work on Aug. 19.

“Marguerite Salazar’s deep roots in Colorado and small business acumen will serve her well in this new role,” Hickenlooper said. “She is a savvy executive, understands regulatory reform and already knows her way around the insurance industry. We are proud she is joining our team.” Salazar will replace Jim Riesberg, who recently resigned. He had served as the Commissioner of Insurance since July 2011.

Salazar will oversee the regulation of the insurance industry in Colorado. Her role will be key to assisting consumers and other stakeholders with insurance needs, including homeowners affected by Colorado wildfires and subsequent flooding. As the chief executive of the Division of Insurance, Salazar will work with the insurance industry to bring an inclusive, open, firm and fair-minded regulatory approach to all lines of insurance under her supervision such as life, homeowner, property and casualty, auto, workers’ compensation and title insurance.

“This is a great opportunity to continue serving the people of Colorado and build on my past work as a public-private executive,” Salazar said. “I look forward to assisting consumers and others find the optimal balance of effectiveness and efficiency when dealing with insurance issues in our state.”

Salazar began her career as a mental health therapist working in the San Luis Valley, where she developed and grew her business, Access Social Work Services, through contracts with public health agencies, hospitals and nursing homes in the region.

Later, Salazar served more than 20 years as the president and CEO of Valley-Wide Health Systems in Alamosa, a large, rural community health system serving more than 45,000 Coloradans through 22 primary care and dental clinics. The company has offices in more than 20 rural counties. As a business executive, Salazar oversaw the growth and expansion of Valley-Wide Health Systems from 50 to 350 employees.

Salazar has most recently worked for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she has been the Region VIII Director since May 2010. As Regional Director, Salazar was primarily responsible for the implementation of the Affordable Care Act throughout the six-state Rocky Mountain Region. In that capacity, she worked closely with governors, congressional delegations, state and local elected leaders as well insurers and health care providers in the Region.

“While we are working diligently to get the Marketplace set up, we as Coloradans have experienced the highest loss of property including hundreds of homes, to wildfires,” Salazar said. “The Office of the Insurance Commissioner has to address the fact that many homeowners were without adequate insurance and I plan to address that issue immediately.”

Salazar will also focus on the successful and efficient operation of Connect for Health Colorado, the state’s new health insurance marketplace, and the continuing implementation of health care reform in the state.

Salazar’s extensive non-profit and community activities includes board appointments to numerous healthcare, education and advocacy organizations across Colorado such as the Women’s Foundation of Colorado, Live Well Colorado, Colorado Nature Conservancy, Colorado State University Board of Governors and the National Center for Farmworker Health.

She has received numerous awards and recognitions, including two from the National Association of Community Health Centers Awards; the Colorado Women’s Forum; and the La Puente Homeless Shelter. She is a Fellow in the National Hispana Leadership Institute as well as a Livingston Fellow in the Bonfil Stanton Foundation. She was named on the “Latina of Excellence List” by Hispanic Magazine in 2004 and 2005, and served as the People to People Ambassador Delegate to Egypt, Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba, South Africa, India, Israel and China.

Salazar earned both a bachelor’s degree psychology, sociology and gerontology and a master's degree in counseling psychology from Adams State College.

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About the Colorado Division of Insurance

The [division](#) is under the Department of Regulatory Agencies and serves the public interest through the following areas of responsibilities: providing a prompt, effective, complaint resolution process for Colorado consumers; providing prompt and effective service and education to Colorado consumers, the public, and regulated entities; promoting and preserving a sound, competitive insurance marketplace through effective state regulation; promoting access to affordable insurance that allows for adequate consumer choice; promoting and developing more streamlined, uniform, and efficient regulatory processes; and ensuring that management systems are in place to operate the Division efficiently and effectively.



Marguerite Salazar